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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [MK](#) [AF](#) [GR](#)  
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER: MACEDONIA VETO THREAT  
REAL/KOSOVO FORCES TO REMAIN/CONSIDER FURTHER ISAF SUPPORT

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard for 1.4 (b,d)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) Ambassador Speckhard paid an introductory call on Minister of Defense Meimarakis January 18. On Turkey, Meimarakis noted that Greece considers Turkey an ongoing threat, but termed PM Karamanlis' pending trip on January 23 a step forward. Meimarakis reiterated the Greek desire to see Macedonia integrated into NATO, but affirmed Greece will block a NATO invitation absent an agreed solution on the name. The Ambassador emphasized the importance of compliance with the Interim Accord, while recognizing the need to obtain progress through the Nimetz process. Meimarakis said Greece will maintain its troop levels in Kosovo. He demurred on providing helicopters to ISAF, but said Greece would consider "what else it could do" and offered to redeploy a field hospital to Afghanistan and to assume control of the Kabul airport. The Ambassador also emphasized the importance of a fair, transparent, and non-political defense procurement process, and raised specific cases with Meimarakis. Meimarakis was accompanied by CHOD Grapsas, Procurement Directorate Head Vassilakos and Diplomatic Advisor Stoidis. A/DATT, ODC Chief, and A/Political Counselor accompanied the Ambassador.

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U.S./Greece Defense Relationship Strong  
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¶2. (C) Meimarakis began the meeting by expressing his pleasure at hosting a "strategic and important" partner. He noted that the U.S./Greek relationship, particularly in defense matters is based on years of positive experience, and he emphasized that Greece sees the United States as a "strategic partner." Meimarakis said that he and CHOD Grapsas were available to U.S. interlocutors "whenever necessary." Meimarakis also expressed desire for frequent contact with the Ambassador.

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Turkey -- Threat and Opportunity  
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¶3. (C) Meimarakis said Greece seeks and values good and peaceful relations with all of its neighbors; however, Greece does consider Turkey to be its "greatest threat." He later noted that Greece is alone among European States in actually requiring its armament systems to provide territorial

defense; he claimed that the average Greek aircraft flew 100,000 hours, the average Greek ship was on deployment 260 days a year, and the average tank company exercised daily. This high level of activity inhibits Greece's ability to deploy abroad. Ambassador Speckhard observed that many saw Greece's security tied to the NATO Alliance, and that by supporting NATO and its operations, Greece is also building greater security with Turkey.

¶4. (C) Meimarakis confirmed that PM Karamanlis will visit Ankara January 23 - 25. Meimarakis said he did not expect any "direct, measurable results" from the visit. Rather, it will "help build an atmosphere of confidence." He said that both the Greek and Turkish governments are "trying to find ways to decrease potential friction." Ambassador Speckhard reiterated U.S. willingness to assist in obtaining more concrete outcomes, noting that this is an important moment to build on better Greece-Turkey relations.

¶5. (C) In a later aside, Meimarakis emphasized the importance of "defining the role of NATO and the EU in peacekeeping operations." Turkey should "not be able to object to Cypriot participation." Greece understands Turkey has concerns with Cyprus, but these concerns should not get in the way of "important peacekeeping operations," and Greece believes that Cypriot participation should not be a barrier to effective working relations between NATO and the EU.

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Macedonia -- Want in NATO But With New Name  
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¶6. (C) Meimarakis laid out the familiar arguments on Macedonia, emphasizing that Greece seeks to see Macedonia integrated into NATO structures along with rest of the Balkans. However, Greece has made a significant compromise by accepting the previously unthinkable -- a compound name REAL/KOSOVO FORCES TO REMAIN/CONSIDER FURTHER ISAF SUPPORT with the term "Macedonia." Macedonia has not made any reciprocal compromises and remains "intransigent." Greece does not wish to create problems at NATO or in the region; on the contrary, Greece has placed a high priority on "playing a leading role in helping the region integrate into NATO and the EU." However, Greece hopes the international community can "convince Skopje to do what needs to be done," and wants U.S. help in obtaining this outcome. Greece's position to block a NATO invitation absent an agreed solution is firm.

¶7. (C) Ambassador Speckhard said that the United States sees the 1995 Interim Accord as the best way forward. It has provisions on how to handle Skopje's entry into NATO absent an agreed solution. The United States also expects Macedonia to be evaluated on NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) criteria. He noted that he had recently been in Washington and had consulted with senior leadership on this issue. There is "a good understanding" of where Greece is on this issue, and a recognition of the importance of focusing on a successful summit and seeking to resolve the name issue prior to the summit. But, if Macedonia meets the NATO criteria, we should not lose this historic opportunity to advance regional stability and European integration. Ambassador Speckhard added that the Bucharest Summit is a unique opportunity for a NATO invitation, and if an invitation is not secured at Bucharest, there is no guarantee that the next opportunity will come anytime soon. Ambassador Speckhard asked Meimarakis to educate his colleagues that this is a unique window of opportunity.

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Kosovo -- Greece In And Staying  
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¶8. (C) Meimarakis said Greece has concerns about a "solution that does not take into account the majority view of one side." Such a solution is "not stable." That said, Greece accepts that no matter what happens KFOR has an essential role to play, and Greece will maintain its force levels and "respond to any additional requirements" that arise.

¶9. (C) Ambassador Speckhard expressed appreciation for Greece's contribution to KFOR. We recognize that Greece has a special relationship with Serbia and we hope we can draw on this relationship as we seek to help guide Serbia through a difficult period. Meimarakis responded positively, noting that Greece is also encouraging investment in the region. Greek officials have also been in touch with the Kosovar Albanian leadership to ask them "not to be too celebratory."

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Afghanistan -- Need to Succeed  
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¶10. (C) Ambassador Speckhard said there is a growing recognition that the Alliance is at a turning point in Afghanistan, and the stakes are high for NATO to succeed, both for Afghanistan and for the Alliance. He expressed appreciation for Greek contributions to ISAF, but said more is needed, asking directly for Greek provision of helicopters and additional Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs).

¶11. (C) Meimarakis responded that Afghanistan is the Alliance's greatest challenge, and that success is "essential for NATO." We are "doomed to succeed," he added, and there is "no room for failure." On the question of Greece's contribution, he said that he would "look to see whether we can do more," but stated that Greece's contribution "already exceeds our capacity" given regional threats. Greece had provided a field hospital and "if needed it could be contributed again." Greece had also operated the Kabul Airport and is willing to renew that service, if desired. He ruled out provision of helicopters to ISAF, noting that Greece requires all of its helicopters for domestic missions; he later added that Greece would be buying additional helicopters this year, and perhaps would be able to provide helicopter support at that time. He did not respond directly to the request for additional OMLTs, but we will follow-up.

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Souda Bay -- Thanks  
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¶12. (C) Ambassador Speckhard thanked Meimarakis for Greek support to U.S. military operations through provision of overflights but also for its superb assistance at Souda Bay. He noted that the Greek contribution to OEF and OIF through Souda is not widely understood.

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Defense Procurement -- Transparent and Non-Political  
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¶13. (C) Ambassador Speckhard said the United States has no objections if it sees U.S. firms lose procurement tenders when the competition is fair; all we ask is that Greece do what is best for the Greek people and base its procurement decisions on price and quality, and that the process be transparent. However, we are frustrated when U.S. firms offer the best price and quality and discover that political factors came into play. He then raised two pending cases: a tender for tank ammunition, where a less competitive German firm was enjoying success, and a pending acceptance of delivery from Boeing to Greece of 12 Apache helicopters.

¶14. (C) Meimarakis said Greece understands that the U.S. offers good prices and high quality; that is why so many Greek weapons systems are of U.S.-origin. He said that Greek decisions are made on quality, price, and what is needed. There is another factor important to Greece, however, and that is possibilities for co-production, which is important for the Greek economy and industry. He said that co-production opportunities were an important factor in the tank ammunition decision. CHOD Grapsas and MOD Procurement Head Vassilakos added that the problem with the Apache helicopters was one of "quality assurance" and that the Greek MOD was in talks with Boeing on these "technical problems."

Vassilakos said that Greece makes its sovereign decisions on procurements based on Greece's interests. He added that political factors "always exist."  
SPECKHARD